

Iowa celebration extends beyond events

*Increased friendship
in the community
included in benefits*

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Benefits of the sesquicentennial celebration of the Mormon Trail in southern Iowa have extended far beyond the actual commemoration itself, according to Pres. E. Louis Butler of the Papillion Nebraska Stake.

The Grand Encampment celebration here ended July 13. It included a re-enactment of the mustering of the Mormon Battalion and the dedication of the reconstructed Kanesville Tabernacle by President Gordon B. Hinckley, who also delivered a major address about the pioneers on the campus of the Iowa School for the Deaf, where the celebration was held. (See July 20 *Church News* for articles and pictures of the celebration.)

Pres. Butler, whose stake straddles Nebraska and Iowa, talked about the benefits that have come because of the commemoration. The stake includes the city of Council Bluffs, where the major celebration was held, as well as three smaller communities in southwest Iowa. The stake also includes four wards and a branch in Nebraska.

Speaking of the benefits that have come to the Church in the area, Pres. Butler, retired general director of security and hazardous materials management for Union Pacific Railroad, specifically mentioned four:



Photo by Dell Van Orden

E. Louis Butler, president of the Papillion Nebraska Stake, reflects on sesquicentennial celebration of the Mormon Trail.

were members of the Church. He said he was going to go to the Atlantic [Iowa] Branch family history center when it opens after a new meetinghouse is completed in August.

"He was really interested and said he

"We were at the fair because of the interest that had been generated with the wagon trains," said Elder Cunningham.

"We are thrilled about the response. Sometimes we think there's not much interest, and then everything opens up.

were not members of the Church. In fact, the co-chairman and co-chairwoman of the entire celebration are not members of the Church.

"I could name 12 people right now and maybe two times that number that I consider personal friends that have come

gy and family history.

Two missionary couples serving in the Nebraska Omaha Mission were assigned to set up family history computers wherever two commemorative wagon trains stopped for the night in Iowa within the mission boundaries, which extend 90 miles into the state.

With the first wagon train, JL2 Inc., which ended its Iowa trek on July 4, the missionaries, Elder Keith and Sister Lila Caldwell and Elder Richard and Sister Erma Cunningham, set up the portable family history facility at three stops in the

Sister Caldwell explained, "We would get about 44 people a night on both computers." She and her husband, who are from Vernal, Utah, are serving in Atlantic. "We would have had more people on the computers, but some didn't want to give them up once they were on them." She said there were long lines most of the time at both computers.

Continuing, she reported that 40 people left their names seeking to know when the Atlantic Branch facility would be opened because they wanted to go use the new family history center.

about their ancestors that they didn't think was possible to find."

Pres. Butler reported that people who visited the family history facility at the camps "had a marvelous time."

In addition, he said, there has been a considerable interest in the stake family history center from both members and non-members since the talk of the celebration began. "Starting in February," he related, "we have seen an increase month over month from last year."

One of the "big pluses" of the sesquicentennial commemoration "is that we

about simply because of this working together to bring about this celebration," said Pres. Butler. "Civic leaders, the mayor, religious leaders from other cultures and just good people who wanted to be a part of it and participate have resulted in personal relationships with people who are not members of the Church. I enjoyed that as much as anything else as we were planning the events."

One of the events held last February in commemoration of the Mormons' departure from Nauvoo was a series of bonfires across Iowa, in which both members and